Suryakumar, Haris punished over Asia Cup behaviour

DUBAI: Pakistan paceman Haris Rauf and Indian captain Suryakumar Yadav were punished by the International Cricket Council (ICC) on Tuesday for their inflammatory behaviour in September's Asia Cup.

India and Pakistan met three times during the tournament — India beating their bitter rivals in all three matches, including the Sept 28 final in Dubai — and on each occasion the sides refused to shake hands.

There was added tension between them at the Asia Cup because of the four-day conflict in May that resulted in more than 70 deaths in missile, drone and military fire on each side.

It had been sparked by a terror attack in Pahalgam on the Indian side of Kashmir, which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan, a charge denied by Islamabad.

In one of the matches, Haris mimicked a fighter jet crashing before showing a "6-0" hand signal, referring to the number of planes the Pakistanis claim they shot down during the conflict.

Suryakumar dedicated the win over Pakistan in the first match on Sept 14 to the victims of the Pahalgam attack and the Indian armed forces, and after the final refused to accept the trophy from Mohsin Naqvi, the president of the Asian Cricket Council (ACC).

The Indian players instead celebrated retaining their regional crown by mimicking holding a trophy.

Mohsin, who is also chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board and Pakistan interior minister, said afterwards they were "welcome to come to the ACC office and collect it from me".

The ICC ruled both Haris and Suryakumar — the ICC said the latter's behaviour "brings the game into disrepute" — would forfeit 30 per cent of their match fee and receive two demerit points.

The latter punishment raised Haris's total to four demerit points in the past two years "resulting in two suspension points".

As a result he will miss the first two One-day Internationals, on Tuesday and Thursday this week, against South Africa in Faisalabad.

Pakistan opener Sahibzada Farhan and Indian pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah got off more lightly with a warning and one demerit point each.

Farhan had mimicked a gun celebration after hitting a half-century.

Bumrah celebrated by mimicking a crashing-plane after he dismissed Haris for six in the final.

The ICC said the punishments were the outcome of several code of conduct proceedings held by match referees Richie Richardson and Andy Pycroft.—AFP

Ashwin out of BBL after knee surgery

SYDNEY: Veteran spin great Ravichandran Ashwin was on Tuesday ruled out of Australia's Big Bash League after knee surgery, missing out on becoming the first Indian international to feature in the Twenty20 event.

The 39-year-old, who signed for Sydney Thunder in September, said in a statement: "I'm gutted to miss BBL. My focus now is recovery and coming back stronger. I'm grateful to the Thunder family and the fans for the warmth they've already shown me."

The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) does not allow any current player in Indian international or domestic cricket to feature in overseas leagues.

But Ashwin retired in December during India's Test tour of Australia and quit the Indian Premier League in August, freeing him up.

"Everyone at Sydney Thunder was devastated to learn of Ash's knee injury that has ruled him out of BBL, and we wish him well in his recovery," said Thunder general manager Trent Copeland.

Ashwin, who played for five IPL franchises, finished his India career with 537 wickets in 106 Tests at an average of 24.00. He also played 116 one-day and 65 T20 Internationals.

The BBL gets under way on Dec 14.—AFP

PSL stakeholders meet

LAHORE: A meeting featuring officials of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Pakistan Super League (PSL) franchise representatives was held on Tuesday.

According to a news release on the PCB website, PSL chief executive officer Salman Naseer during the virtual meeting provided updates regarding the valuation process pertaining to the existing franchise teams.

A brainstorming session was also held regarding the 2026 window for organising PSL 11, player acquisition mechanisms and the playing format of the league moving forward, added the release.

Follow-up meetings are scheduled to be held later this week on cricketing matters.—Agencies

PAKISTAN batter Mohammad Rizwan plays a shot as South African wicket-keeper Quinton de Kock watches during the first One-day International at the Iqbal Stadium on Tuesday.—AFP

Contributions all around as Pakistan beat SA in first ODI

Dawn Report

FAISALABAD: After the bowlers had done their job, the batters came good for Pakistan — albeit an all too familiar late collapse — at the Iqbal Stadium in Faisalabad on Tuesday.

In the first international match at the venue in 17 years, Pakistan marked the start of Shaheen Shah Afridi's era as One-day International captain with a two-wicket victory over South Africa to strike the opening blow in the three-match series.

Shaheen had won the toss and elected to field with his side riding on inspired spells of bowling by pacer Naseem Shah and spinners Saim Ayub and Abrar Ahmed to bowl South Africa out for 263.

South Africa had got off to the ideal start with half-centuries for debutant Lhuan-dre Pretorius (57) and the returning Quinton de Kock (63) — the duo sharing a 98-run opening stand.

But with the exception of skipper Matthew Breetzke (42) and Corbin Bosch (41) in the end, none of their batters could get going as Naseem (3-40), Saim (2-39) and Abrar (3-53) scythed through their line-up.

Half-centuries by Salman Ali Agha (62) and Mohammad Rizwan (57) then steadied Pakistan midway through their chase after Fakhar Zaman and Saim had laid the platform with a solid 87-run opening partnership.

Salman and Rizwan combined for another 91 after Pakistan had lost three quick wickets. Rizwan fell with Pakistan needing 68 more to win but Salman struck a breezy partnership with Hussain Talat and after the hosts had an all to familiar late collapse, Mohammad Nawaz and Shaheen saw them through to a confidence-boosting victory.

South Africa, meanwhile, will rue they were unable to capitalise on a storming start by Pretorius and De Kock. Pretorius and De Kock, playing his first ODI since returning from retirement after the ODI World Cup, laid into the Pakistan attack from the start as South Africa reached 94-0 by the end of the 15th over.

Pakistan needed a breakthrough and it was provided by Saim as Pretorius' slash found a diving Nawaz; the left-hander departing after having hit seven fours and a six in his 60-ball stay.

De Kock, however, was proving a thorn for the hosts, dispatching anything loose to the fence and raised his half century with his fifth four — a sweep off Saim — in exactly 50 balls.

Scoreboard

SOUTH AFRICA:	
L. D. Pretorius c Nawaz b Saim	57
Q. de Kock b Naseem	63
T. de Zorzi c&b Saim	18
M. Breetzke c Nawaz b Abrar	42
S. Qeshile c Fakhar b Nawaz	22
D. Ferreira c Babar b Abrar	3
G. Linde c Rizwan b Naseem	2
C. Bosch b Shaheen	41
B. Fortuin lbw b Abrar	0
L. Ngidi not out	0
L. Williams b Naseem	1
EXTRAS (LB-1, NB-2, W-11)	14
TOTAL (all out, 49.1 overs)	263

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-98 (Pretorius), 2-141 (de Kock), 3-147 (de Zorzi), 4-191 (Qeshile), 5-202 (Ferreira), 6-209 (Linde), 7-228 (Breetzke), 8-228 (Fortuin), 9-262 (Bosch)

BOWLING: Shaheen 10-0-55-1 (4w), Naseem 9.1-1-40-3 (2nb), Salman 3-0-30-0 (1w), Abrar 9-1-53-3, Saim 8-0-39-2 (1w), Nawaz 10-0-45-1

PAKISTAN:	
Fakhar Zaman c Fortuin b Ferreira	45
Saim Ayub lbw b Ferreira	39
Babar Azam lbw b Fortuin	7
Mohammad Rizwan c Pretorius b Bosch	55
Salman Ali Agha c Ferreira b Ngidi	62
Hussain Talat c Linde b Ngidi	22
Hasan Nawaz st de Kock b Linde	1
Mohammad Nawaz c Fortuin b Bosch	9
Shaheen Shah Afridi not out	4
Naseem Shah not out	0
EXTRAS (LB-10, W-10)	20
TOTAL (for eight wickets, 49.4 overs)	264

DID NOT BAT: Abrar Ahmed

FALL OF WICKETS: 1-87 (Saim), 2-102 (Fakhar), 3-105 (Babar), 4-196 (Rizwan), 5-241 (Hussain), 6-244 (Hasan), 7-252 (Salman), 8-263 (Nawaz)

BOWLING: Ngidi 9-0-46-2 (2w), Williams 7-0-36-0 (1w), Donovan 9-0-53-2, Bosch 6.4-0-32-2 (2w), Linde 8-0-49-1 (1w), Fortuin 10-0-38-1

RESULT: Pakistan won by two wickets.

PLAYER-OF-THE-MATCH: Salman Ali Agha

Shaheen, however, brought back Naseem into the attack and after just three runs came off overs 23 and 24, the pacer struck when De Kock chopped him onto his stumps, having hit six fours and two sixes in his 72-ball knock.

Pakistan got a foothold they wanted and one-drop Tony De Zorzi (18) departed in the next over, offering Saim a tame return.

Breetzke and debutant Sinethemba Qeshile began the rebuilding job but just when the Proteas seemed to be gaining momentum, Nawaz struck to remove Qeshile (22) and Donovan Ferreira soon became Abrar's first victim.

Naseem cleaned up Breetzke off a no-ball but bounced back after that disappointment by getting George Linde caught behind two balls later.

South Africa reached the 40-over mark at 211-6. The visitors were eyeing a closing flourish with Breetzke and Bosch but Pakistan hit back again when Abrar ended the former's stay and then had Bjorn Fortuin lbw on the next ball.

Bosch, however, got stuck in and took South Africa past 250 — muscling away Shaheen for consecutive boundaries in the 45th over and repeating the trick in the next over by Abrar — before seeing his stumps dismantled by a searing yorker by Shaheen in the penultimate over.

Naseem picked up his third wicket in the last over when he cleaned up tailender Lizaad Williams.

Saim and fellow opener Fakhar's measured approach saw the side reach 53-0 in the first 10 overs. The duo stayed compact, avoiding any rash shots, but when opportunities came, they pounced on them.

After the pair added 34 more to the partnership, Saim (39 off 42, four fours and six) was trapped leg-before by South African spinner Linde, who surprised the left-hander with a quicker one.

Fakhar (45 off 57, four fours and two sixes) then holed Ferreira out to Fortuin in the deep before Fortuin struck gold with the ball, shooting in one to get Babar out lbw as Pakistan felt the heat at 106-3 by the end of the 20th over.

The hosts reached 129-3 halfway through the innings before Salman, and Rizwan at the other end amped up the run-rate, the latter flourishing with a cover drive and a sweep for fours as Pakistan crossed the 150-run mark in the 29th over.

Boundaries, though, were at a premium after that – only three coming from overs 30 to 36; all of them from Rizwan's bat. He raised his half century off 66 balls in the 37th over but fell soon after, having hit six fours in his 74-ball knock, finding Pretorius in the deep off Bosch.

Hussain, though, got going with a cracking cover drive for four, which left Pakistan needing 58 off the last 10 overs.

South Africa had restricted the boundaries in the next three overs but there was no stopping the singles as Hussain and Salman kept rotating the strike, chipping away at the total until the latter hoisted Ferreira down the ground for a sumptuous six to bring up his half-century off 56 balls.

Hussain made 22 off 25 before falling in the 46th over and was soon followed by Hasan Nawaz, stumped off Linde, before Salman departed on the last ball of the 48th over when he skied Ngidi to Ferreira – having only got the fifth four of his 71-ball innings on the previous delivery.

Nawaz, though, settled any nerves or creeping doubts when he launched Ferreira down the ground for six and despite him falling with the scores level, Pakistan got through with two balls to spare.

Williams loses Zimbabwe contract after entering drug rehab

HARARE: Zimbabwe all-rounder Sean Williams, one of the country's finest ever cricketers, will no longer be considered for selection after he entered into a drug rehabilitation programme, Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) said in a statement on Tuesday.

Williams, 39, who made his international debut in 2005 and is one of Zimbabwes most experienced players, will not have his ZC contract extended beyond its expiry in December this year.

Williams withdrew from the Zimbabwe side that took part in the recent T20 World Cup Africa Qualifier 2025 in Harare, one of several tours and tournaments he has skipped over the years.

"During an internal investigation to understand the reasons for his unavailability, Williams disclosed that he has been struggling with drug addiction and has voluntarily entered rehabilitation," ZC said in a statement.

"A review of Williams record indicates a history of disciplinary issues and repeated unavailability, which has impacted team preparations and performance.

"While ZC commends him for seeking rehabilitation... after careful consideration, ZC has concluded that Williams will no longer be considered for national selection."

Williams long-time national team-mate Brendan Taylor, 39, has recently returned to playing for the team after serving a 3-1/2 year ban for breaching the ICC's anti-corruption code.

He also previously entered rehabilitation after admitting cocaine use.

"ZC sincerely acknowledges and appreciates his [Williams] immense contribution to Zimbabwean cricket over the past two decades," the ZC statement continued.

"Williams has played a pivotal role in some of the most significant moments in our recent history, leaving a lasting legacy both on and off the field.

"ZC wishes him strength in his recovery and every success in his future endeavours."

Williams averaged a healthy 45.25 with the bat from his 24 Tests, and also played 164 One-day Internationals and 85 T20 Internationals.—Reuters

Sabalenka to face Kyrgios in Dubai on Dec 28

PARIS: Aryna Sabalenka will play Nick Kyrgios on December 28 in Dubai in a "Battle of the Sexes" tennis showdown, organisers confirmed on Tuesday.

The rare man-versus-woman match between world number 1 Sabalenka and 30-year-old semi-retired Australian Kyrgios echoes the legendary 1973 encounter when Billie Jean King defeated Bobby Riggs in a key moment as the push for women's rights gained ground.

Sabalenka, who is competing at the WTA Finals this week in Riyadh, commented: "I have so much respect for Billie Jean King and what she has done for the women's game.

"I'm proud to represent women's tennis and to be part of this modern take of the iconic Battle of the Sexes match."

The Belarusian said she had a lot of respect for Kyrgios.

"But make no mistake, I'm ready to bring my A-game," the four-time Grand Slam winner warned the volatile Australian showman who is currently 652nd in the ATP rankings having not played since March.

"When the World No.1 challenges you, you answer the call," Kyrgios, 30, said.

"I've got massive respect for Aryna; she's a powerhouse and a true champion.

"But I've never backed down from a challenge, and I'm not just here to play, I'm here to entertain. This is what I live for. Dubai, get ready for a show," added the 2022 Wimbledon finalist.

Kyrgios threw down the gauntlet to Sabalenka during the US Open in September, saying in an interview he would easily dispatch the 27-year-old.

Sabalenka responded by saying she was ready for the challenge — setting up an intriguing end to the 2025 tennis season. —AFP

Pakistan to host ATP Challenger event for first time: Aisam

By Kashif Abbasi

ISLAMABAD: Staging the ATP Challenger Cup for the first time in Pakistan will attract foreign players besides raising the country as an important destination for the professional sport, Pakistan Tennis Federation (PTF) president Aisam-ul- Haq said on Tuesday.

Addressing a press conference, Aisam said that Pakistan will be hosting an ATP event from Nov 24 to 30 which he termed a milestone.

"Top international players will be seen in action at the ATP challenger event carrying a prize money of $50,000," the PTF president said.

He said that hosting an ATP event was a dream come true for Pakistan.

"It's a huge step forward for our players, fans and the entire sporting community. We are committed to providing world-class facilities and opportunities for our athletes," he said and added the PTF will host this event in a befitting manner.

"Pakistan is growing as an important destination for international players. Next year we are planning to hold a mega ITF tournament," he said while revealing that the federation was also planning to hold a tennis league next year.

Aisam said that the PTF hosted a number of international event this year in Pakistan, while 12 teams were sent abroad for different competitions.

He also appreciated talented junior players, including Mikaeel Ali Baig and Shayan Afridi, for giving outstanding performance in international events.

"Their victories are a testament to the growing talent pool in Pakistan."

The PTF president announced plans to develop a covered court project at the PTF Tennis Complex to ensure round-the-year training opportunities for players regardless of weather conditions.

Meanwhile, Aisam made a visit to the Pakistan Sweet Home in Sector H-9, Islamabad along with some players and PTF officials.

During the visit, Aisam and the players interacted with the children present at the orphanage and shared with them moments of joy and inspiration.

Stokes signs England deal until 2027 Ashes

LONDON: Ben Stokes has been awarded a fresh two-year contract that will take him through to the end of the next home Ashes series in 2027, England cricket chiefs announced on Tuesday.

The Test captain, whose previous deal had been due to expire next year, is one of 14 players handed two-year deals by the England and Wales Cricket Board, including pace bowler Jofra Archer and highly rated young batsman Jacob Bethell.

Twelve others have signed one-year contracts.

Stokes, 34, has a chequered injury history and has not played any cricket since July following a shoulder injury.

But he is expected to be available for the first Test of a five-match Ashes series against Australia, which starts in Perth on Nov 21.

Jonny Bairstow's central contract has finally come to an end, while spinner Jack Leach also misses out after falling out of favour.

Rob Key, managing director of England men's cricket, said the contracts reflect the depth and strength of talent available.

"We have awarded two-year deals to our multi-format players, so we can manage their workloads responsibly and give them the stability they need to perform across formats," he said. "We have also secured a number of white-ball players on longer agreements to help us plan effectively around the growing franchise calendar and ensure England remains their priority."—AFP

Injured Seifert out of WI T20s

WELLINGTON: New Zealand opener Tim Seifert has been ruled out of this month's T20 series with West Indies after the wicket-keeper suffered a broken finger during a domestic match, the country's cricket governing body (NZC) said on Tuesday.

Mitchell Hay was called up to replace Seifert before the five-match bilateral series kicks off in Auckland on Wednesday, NZC said in a statement.

"Seifert retired hurt after being hit on the finger ... a subsequent X-ray revealed a fracture to the right index finger," it added.

New Zealand coach Rob Walter said Seifert, who has played 77 international matches in the format and scored 12 fifties, has been a key player as they prepare for next year's T20 World Cup, which begins in February.

"He showed in the recent T20 series that hes building up to top form, so its disappointing that that has been halted as we continue to prepare for a pinnacle event," Walter said.—Reuters

Labuschagne in form of his life ahead of Ashes

SYDNEY: Australia's Marnus Labuschagne slammed a fifth century in eight innings, firing an ominous warning shot ahead of the Ashes with some of the richest form of his life.

The Queensland captain was dropped ahead of Australia's mid-year Test tour of the West Indies after an extended lean spell.

But he has come roaring back, hitting 101 from 111 balls against New South Wales in a one-day game at Sydney on Monday.

It was the 31-year-old's third hundred this season in the 50-over format, to go with two in the red-ball Sheffield Shield.

"The only one I can think of is probably 2019 at Glamorgan as a period of time," Labuschagne told reporters when asked if this period was his best ever run of form.

"But probably not across both formats. With both formats I feel like my batting is in a really nice place, just trusting my skills and trusting myself out there ... It's all coming together."

Labuschagne's stunning run makes him an almost certain starter in the first Test against England at Perth on Nov 21, but at what position he bats remains to be seen.

All his recent runs have come at number three, but with Australia struggling to lock in a partner for Usman Khawaja at the top he is also a candidate to open.

Australia are expected to name their Ashes squad this week.

Should Labuschagne open, then Cameron Green would likely stay at three ahead of Steve Smith and Travis Head with all-rounder Beau Webster retaining his place at six.

If Australia opt for a specialist opener — with Matt Renshaw, Sam Konstas and Jake Weatherald in contention — then Green is expected to drop to six and Webster will miss out.

"I'm prepared either way. It doesn't concern me where I'm batting," said Labuschagne, who has 11 Test centuries.

"The important thing is my process and trying to be consistent. That's what's important."

England drew 2-2 at home in the most recent Ashes series in 2023, but have not won in Australia since 2010/2011.

Their preparations have been far from ideal, crashing 3-0 in a just-concluded one-day series against New Zealand.

The defeats featured a litany of batting failures by the likes of Joe Root, Ben Duckett, Jamie Smith and Jacob Bethell. They have just one red-ball lead-up game before the first Ashes Test, against an England A side in Perth next week.—AFP